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INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY 0074  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY 0117  
RHMFIS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 002648

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/SPG, AF/SE AND AF/PD  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/08/2016

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SUBJECT: INTERIOR MINISTER IMPLIES U.S. LINK TO  
JOURNALIST'S MURDER

REF: KHARTOUM 02157

Classified By: P/E Chief E. Whitaker, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) In widely-reported remarks to the Arabic-language press, Minister of the Interior Al Zubair Bashir Taha alleged on November 8 that a Sudanese employee of a "Western Embassy" was involved in the September beheading of "Al Wafaq" Editor-in-Chief Mohammed Taha (reftel). Though Embassy Senior Guard Adam Ibrahim Al Haj (strictly protect), a leader of the Fur community in Khartoum, was arrested on October 19 by the Criminal Investigation Police in connection with the assassination, the Embassy has no reason to believe that Al Haj was involved in the murder.

¶2. (C) The "Al Wafaq" office had been attacked in January 2006 after one of Taha's articles was criticized as insulting to Darfurian women. Shortly thereafter, a group of Fur notables in Khartoum, including Al Haj, filed a libel suit against Taha. All 50 litigants, including Al Haj's pregnant wife and sister-in-law, were arrested following the murder. Al Haj had worked for the Embassy for over four years as a residential security guard.

¶3. (C) Taha was a controversial figure, with long-standing links to the National Islamic Front (the precursor of the ruling National Congress Party), Vice President Ali Osman Taha, and the Iranian government. Since his murder, no suspects have been definitively identified, though wide-ranging speculation has included the National Intelligence and Security Service, Islamists, returnees from Iraq, Al Qaeda, Hassan Al Turabi's Popular Congress Party (PCP), and Senior Assistant to the President Minni Minawi. Minister Taha had suggested on September 6 that foreign extremists were responsible for the murder.

POWERS